

The UFO Movement: In "philosophical disarray."

Budd Hopkins, chief guru of the UFO-abduction Movement, and his close associate, psychiatrist Dr. Rima Laibow, have had a bitter split since they appeared together on the Oct. 14, 1988 TV show "UFO Coverup?--Live." Laibow praises Hopkins, and his principal deputy Dr. David Jacobs, for "alerting and sensitizing the therapeutic community" to the problem, but she argues that trained psychotherapists are better equipped to help the subjects.

Hopkins responds that "UFO abductees...require a new, subtler kind of therapeutic and hypnotic skill. Turning them over willy-nilly to a conventional psychiatrist or therapist untrained in these new skills [which he and Jacobs claim to have developed] would be...damaging." Hopkins also criticizes Laibow and other psychotherapists because they charge for their work with "abductees" while he and his associates do not.

As a result of the break, neither Hopkins nor Jacobs, who were featured speakers at Laibow's first conference on UFO-abductions, held last May, were invited to speak at her second conference, held in early February, in Blacksburg, Va. Approximately 70 persons attended this most recent conference, called TREAT [Treatment and Research on Experienced Anomalous Trauma]. Stanton T. Friedman, one of about half a dozen pro-UFOlogists invited to speak, could not attend but sent a video tape of one of his P.T. Barnum type lectures. No skeptical UFOlogists were invited to speak.

* * *

Although MUFON's membership has doubled in the last couple years to around 2,500, objections to the strong endorsement of the Gulf Breeze UFO-photo case by MUFON chief Walt Andrus [p. 5] have resulted in the resignation (or expulsion) of several State Directors and long-time members.

One of these, former Alabama State Director Bob Boyd is creating a new UFO organization, called Aerial Anomalies International. Another, Jim Melesciuc, is publishing his own bi-monthly UFO newsletter, called "Orbiter." Bill Pitts, former state director for Arkansas, also resigned from MUFON in protest over Andrus' endorsement of the Gulf Breeze case.

* * *

The Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) is sharply criticized for its "extreme insensitivity" to the needs of those who report extraordinary "visitor" experiences, in the recent Winter issue of Whitley Strieber's quarterly newsletter, "The Communion Letter." The criticism was voiced by Ed Conroy, a San Antonio journalist whose book "Report on Communion" purports to offer an objective assessment of Strieber's claims of alien encounters. [See SUN #1, p. 4]. In the book's last chapter, Conroy claims he too has experienced UFO-abduction.

One example of CUFOS' "extreme insensitivity," cited by Conroy, was its response to a woman who called to report "her son's account of seeing a moose in his closet." [Conroy doesn't say whether the moose was dead or alive.] Another example: a woman who reported a "blackish-gray ball which apparently 'scanned' me while I was up on my Mom's roof sunbathing."

Strieber's organization is much more open-minded to such "unconventional" visitor reports, judging from its Autumn issue. It contains one report of oriental-looking people climbing in trees, one of them with a "beautiful beaded antenna sticking out of one side of the head." Another report in the same issue came from a person who said they recalled a childhood encounter with tiny creatures who had "flowers and plants growing out of their heads." Still another report from a woman living in house more than a century old who believed it was haunted by "a bunch of good old-fashioned ghosts" until she read Strieber's book. [Now she realizes the visitors, including a "tall blond," are ETs.]

An editorial in the Winter issue of Strieber's newsletter complains: "We find it ironic and tragic that so many close encounter witnesses have suffered at the hands of UFO researchers and organizations from whom they have sought help. These organizations were originally set up to investigate 'hard' evidence and are not equipped to deal with the complex psychological changes that witnesses undergo. Perhaps they should confine their activities to investigating sightings, government reports and other tangible evidence..." (Emphasis added.)

Beneath the editorial is a box headlined: How To Join a Communion Group. It reports that Communion groups in 14 states and in two foreign countries "are designed to be primarily social organizations where informal, open-minded discussion can take place among people who have personally had visitor, UFO or other related experiences and where new friendships can be made." [ATTENTION LONELY HEARTS.]

Strieber's newsletter may pose a threat "Playboy" and "Hustler." The Winter issue, highlighting upcoming articles, says: "Many of us have sexual encounters with visitors. But we keep that part of our experiences a deep, dark secret. The Communion Letter addresses this issue in a frank, forthright and supportive manner--for the first time anywhere." [It will be interesting to learn if ET's practice group sex and whether some are homosexual.]

Although the Editor of "The Communion Letter" is still listed as Dora Ruffner, of Boulder, Colo., and Strieber's wife is listed as Executive Editor, it appears that Conroy, who lives in San Antonio, is serving as the defacto editor.

* * *

Strieber's former mentor but now arch-rival, Budd Hopkins, has yet to publish the first issue of his planned Intruder Foundation newsletter, called "IF." When a subscriber complained he had not yet received a first issue, Hopkins urged patience and said the first issue would be out late last year. But as of March--none has been received.

* * *

Jerome Clark, editor of the CUFOS's bi-monthly "International UFO Reporter," [IUR] has belatedly acknowledged that the "Top Secret/Eyes Only MJ-12" documents which claim the U.S. government recovered a crashed saucer and alien bodies near Roswell, N.M. may be counterfeit.

In Clark's editorial in the Sept./Oct. 1989 issue of IUR--mailed in December--he writes: "Today the issue remains unsettled, though at the moment the skeptics seem to have the upper hand." Clark cites the fact that the Truman signature on one of the MJ-12 papers is identical to one on an authentic Truman letter, dated Oct. 1, 1947.

But later in Clark's editorial he cautions: "None of this is to say, of course, that the MJ-12 briefing document has been proven to be bogus, or that no such project...could have existed. But it is to say that, despite the enormous, even heroic research efforts of Stan Friedman [who along with William Moore and Jaime Shandera made public and promoted the MJ-12 documents] the issue is unresolved--and probably unresolvable."

Clark praises Friedman, who was given \$16,000 by the Fund for UFO Research [FUFOR] to investigate the MJ-12 papers. Clark omits any mention of the fact that I first disclosed the Truman signature "smoking gun" (with the assistance of Christopher Allan) in the Winter issue of CSICOP's "Skeptical Inquirer." [Clark abhors CSICOP as Nature abhors a vacuum.]

[Friedman's \$16,000 MJ-12 authenticity investigation report, originally due late last year, has slipped until this Spring, according to FUFOR spokesman. But don't hold your breath.]

While Clark and CUFOS officially straddled the fence on MJ-12 authenticity, his publication carried two long pro-MJ-12 articles by Friedman, one titled: "The MJ-12 Debunking Fiasco." A third IUR article was headlined: "MJ-12 Document Authentic, Says Expert." There were no IUR articles informing readers of the many reasons to suspect a hoax. If Clark still believes that the question of MJ-12 authenticity is "unresolved"--he stands alone among many experienced UFOlogists--with the notable exception of Friedman and Moore.

* * *

Robert G. Todd--a very sharp-eyed pro-UFOlogist researcher--recently discovered that the rubber-stamp used to mark "Top Secret/Eyes Only" on the MJ-12 papers was a make-it-yourself kit type, similar to one long used by William L. Moore for the return address on his envelopes. Further, the typeface of Moore's make-it-yourself address stamp matches the typeface of the rubber-stamp used for the MJ-12 documents.

* * *

Even if the MJ-12 papers are counterfeit, Clark believes the MJ-12 "briefing paper's account of the Roswell [crashed saucer recovery] event IS ESSENTIALLY ACCURATE." (Emphasis added) This view seemingly is shared by other top CUFOS officials, including Don Schmitt, director of special investigations, and Mark Rodeghier, CUFOS' scientific director. According to Rodeghier, "The Roswell UFO crash of 1947 remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of ufology."

This past September, Schmitt and Kevin Randle (a free-lance writer and former Army helicopter pilot) headed a 10-person team that visited the alleged UFO-crash site area near Corona, N.M. to search for physical artifacts from the object that crashed on the remote ranch of 'Mac' Brazel more than 42 years earlier. Because the "crash site" area is relatively barren semi-desert with no notable landmarks, to try to locate the site the CUFOS team had to depend on the 42-year old recollections of Mac Brazel's son Bill, who was not living at the ranch at the time.

Judging from Mac Brazel's description of the debris shortly after he found it, given during an interview in the offices of the Roswell Daily Record, the crashed object was a balloon-borne Rawin-target, consisting of a series of lightweight panels made of balsa wood and metal foil-coated paper to reflect radar energy and enable the balloon to be tracked by radar.

Despite the use of a metal detector and the drilling of about 200 test-bore holes, the CUFOS team found no artifacts. But, undaunted, CUFOS hopes to return this year for a further search.

Schmitt and Randle claim to have located many "new" persons with 40+ year recollections of the crashed saucer and alien bodies beyond the several dozen turned up by Moore and Friedman in their earlier effort. At least some of these "new" witnesses emerged following last Fall's "Unexplained Mysteries" TV program which offered a fanciful crashed-saucer/alien bodies treatment of the incident. Schmitt and Randle are writing a new book on the Roswell crashed-saucer tale which they say will be published late this year.

QUESTION: Where were these many "witnesses" in 1950 when a best-selling book, "Behind The Flying Saucers," authored by Frank

Scully, claimed a flying saucer had crashed near Aztec, N.M.? Why didn't any of them step forward with their then fresh recollections and inform Scully that the saucer had really crashed on the Brazel ranch near Corona, not Aztec? And why didn't any of these many witnesses contact the University of Colorado in 1966 when the USAF announced it had contracted with the University to conduct an independent UFO investigation?

Recent issue of "Oddysey" (sic) newsletter, published by ParaNet, quotes Jerome Clark as saying: "The Roswell Incident is the most important known UFO event in history. By the time this [CUFOS] investigation is over it will shape our future understanding of the UFO phenomenon. This investigation gets to the very core of all issues." [Rots of Ruck, Jerry.]

* * *

In mid-1982, William Moore reported at the MUFON annual conference that he expected to publish a sequel to "The Roswell Incident" in the spring of 1983 but he apparently was unable to find an interested publisher. Now that Schmitt and Randle are invading Moore's crashed-saucer turf, Moore reportedly is again seeking an interested publisher.

* * *

Whitley Strieber, whose sequel book "Transformation" fell far short of the best-seller status of "Communion," and whose movie "Communion" was a financial flop, says that he will no longer write about his strange "visitors," except in the pages of his newsletter, "The Communion Letter." In the lead article in the Winter issue, Strieber says this could change if there were "visitors' emergence into general awareness" or "if there were to be some official acknowledgement of their presence."

Strieber asks newsletter readers to suggest ways in which he can "deepen this relationship" with his visitors. But he adds: "please don't suggest that I get them to tell me the future, say where they are from, answer other questions or prove their existence. I have had such a frustrating time with these things that I have stopped bothering."

* * *

"Whatever your current view of the UFO phenomenon, that opinion will be forever changed by the book you hold in your hands." Thus begins the introductory chapter to the new book "The Gulf Breeze Sightings: The Most Astounding Multiple Sightings of UFOs in U.S. History." The book is authored by Ed Walters and his wife Frances. The introduction was written by Budd Hopkins.

Hopkins is partially correct. For those who believe that

the head of the world's largest group of UFO investigators together with a Navy physicist with a Ph.D. would never be taken in by wild tales and hokey-looking UFO photos, "that opinion will be forever changed" by reading this new book.

In my opinion, the general public is not likely to find Ed/Frances Walters' tales convincing--but then I never expected "Communion" to make the nation's best-seller lists and remain there for many weeks. The Walters reportedly received a \$200,000 cash advance from their prestigious publisher, William Morrow. (They shared \$20,000 of this with Navy physicist Dr. Bruce S. Maccabee for writing a chapter in which he reports finding no evidence of a hoax.) ABC-TV reportedly recently paid \$400,000 for rights to produce a TV mini-series based on the book, which also is to be published in Germany and the U.K.

To briefly characterize the book, its tales of encounters with aliens, telepathic transmission of pornographic imagery and "Star Trek" type "blue beams" make Strieber's claims pale by comparison. The UFO photos, all taken in near or complete darkness, strike me as less impressive than the daylight UFO photos taken by Swiss farmer Billy Meier which were rejected a decade ago as hoaxes by most experienced UFOlogists.

But Walt Andrus, MUFON's international director, offers a different appraisal in the book's appendix: "The Gulf Breeze Case ranks as one of the most important UFO cases in the past 40 years..." Andrus adds: "If one were to briefly speculate on the solution to the enigma occurring in Gulf Breeze, it might take the following scenario. On or before Nov. 11, 1987 [the date when Ed "Walters says he took his first UFO photos], the intelligence behind the UFOs implanted a tiny communication device within Ed's head whereby they could communicate by voice or a humming sound to alert him to the proximity of their craft.

"Ed was conceivably programmed to take the photographs for public distribution as part of the entities' ultimate plan to make themselves gradually known to the public and world governments...A successful businessman and civic citizen was probably selected... so that the events and evidence would be...accepted by the scientific community as factual..." (Emphasis added.)

[NOTE: Ed Walters, whom Andrus suggests was "selected" by the UFO for this important mission, had earlier--at age 20--pleaded guilty to forgery and served a two-year prison term. This suggests a possible pattern: Travis Walton, who claimed he was abducted by a UFO in 1975, had earlier pleaded guilty to burglary and forgery charges but was put on probation instead of going to prison.]

UFOnauts could have achieved such objectives far more convincingly if the UFO had hovered over the Superbowl football

game and, in full view of the stadium and TV audience, used its "blue beam" to abduct the referee as Ed Walters claims a UFO did to him in Gulf Breeze--without any adverse after-effects.

* * *

Thanks to Glasnost, Soviet citizens were exposed to more coverage of UFOs in their print and electronic news media last year than during the previous decade, according to Yuli Platov, senior research associate at the USSR's Institute of Terrestrial Magnetism, Radio Research and the Ionosphere. (Interview with Platov was published in the English edition of the "Soviet New Times," and reprinted in U.S. "UFO" magazine, 1990, #2.)

Platov said the "strongest incitement" that prompted the Soviet Academy of Sciences to initiate a "systematic study" of UFO reports in the late 1970s was the "jellyfish-like" UFO in 1977, reported by persons living near Petrozavodsk," in the Northwest part of the USSR.

But it was James Oberg (vice-chairman of CSICOP's UFO Subcommittee), who first identified the "jellyfish UFO" as the exhaust flame from the rocket used to launch Cosmos 955 from the Plesetsk "cosmodrome." Existence of the major Soviet launch facility at Plesetsk had been kept secret from Soviet public even though it was known in the West since the mid-1960s. (Oberg is a leading expert on the Soviet space program.)

In the Platov interview, he admitted that "until as recently as five years ago, the names of the cosmodromes at Kapustin Yar and Plesetsk were kept secret." Now, he added, it is possible to identify the source UFO reports that are triggered by Soviet space launches and recoveries.

Platov paraphrased the comment by (the late) Dr. Edward U. Condon, who headed the University of Colorado UFO study in the late 1960s, that he "marvelled at the frenzy with which many people hold totally ungrounded [UFO] convictions... [and] draw no distinction between possibility and fact." The Soviet scientist added: "I wish it was me who had uttered these words which I subscribe to, of course."

UFO POTPOURRI: "Earth Contact" UFO conference is scheduled to be held in the "Sacred Valley of the Incas," in Peru, May 16-25. Cost is \$1,695 for departures from Miami. No speakers are listed but subject-matter is to include "Ancient Astronauts"--possibly a reference to Sen. John Glenn??. Full-page advertisement in "UFO" magazine offers a "UFO Detector" for \$239 to "protect yourself from alien abductions." My book, "UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game," offers equivalent protection and costs only \$14.95.

Opinions expressed above are those of Philip J. Klass and do not necessarily represent those of any organization.